

State and Local

2nd special session starts today Legislators called back to tackle \$3.5 billion budget deficit

AUSTIN (AP) — State legislators didn't succeed at balancing the budget in a month-long special session headed back to the Capitol Monday, try again.

For the first time since 1969, the governor has called back-to-back special sessions in a bid to balance a

state budget showing a \$3.5 billion deficit.

In their first try, lawmakers failed to agree on much.

The House passed a bill to cut spending by \$740 million. The Senate voted to cut only \$418 million. The conference committee ap-

pointed to resolve those differences never did.

The two chambers were even further apart on the need to raise taxes. While senators and Gov. Mark White said yes, House members said no.

The Texas Constitution says tax

legislation must start in the House, so no tax bill ever surfaced.

Within 30 minutes of the Legislature's adjournment last Thursday, White called them back. In doing so, he repeated his recommendation for a 1.125-cent, one-year sales tax increase combined with spending cuts.

That thorny tax issue, made even touchier by the closeness of the November elections, still hasn't been resolved. But White and legislative leaders sound optimistic.

"Things are moving in the right direction," White said. "We're closer to a solution now than we were 30 days ago."

Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby, who unsuccessfully pushed for a permanent tax increase to balance the budget, said he remains hopeful.

"Although it did not produce the desired results all in one session, substantial progress was made," Hobby said. "And I have high hopes for the session beginning Monday."

House Speaker Gib Lewis, D-Fort Worth, said he will support a tax increase if the Senate approves budget cuts and money-saving cash management programs he believes would keep state checks from bouncing.

At that point, if a tax still is needed, Lewis said he would vote for one.

"You get your bottom line, you make your cuts where you can make them, you try to pass whatever proposals you can to infuse monies into the state treasury," he said. "Once you've done that, if that leaves a shortage, then you go to taxes."

Crime victims want lawmakers to stay out of compensation fund

AUSTIN (AP) — Crime victims want state legislators to keep their hands off a special fund collected from convicted criminals as compensation for violent acts.

"I say 'Shame on you' to any elected official who wants to take that money and further victimize people whose lives have been shattered," Donya Witherspoon of Fort Worth said Saturday at a gathering of representatives of crime victim organizations at the Capitol.

She and representatives of groups in Fort Worth, Dallas, Austin, Harlingen, Waco, Harker Heights, El Paso and Lubbock met Saturday to plan demands on the 1987 Legislature.

Participants were outspoken against tentative moves to cut \$2 million in state money for administration of the attorney general's fund that compensates crime victims for expenses and lost wages caused by violent crimes.

The Crime Victims Compensation fund is financed from fines paid by convicted felons.

"It is even more shameful and more horrible that the people elected to represent and protect you take

the money that is set up to help you go on living your lives and bury the loved ones," Witherspoon told about 50 people gathered at the Capitol, most of them carrying black balloons.

"I say that fund was set up and solely supported by fines imposed on convicted criminals and there are no tax monies involved," she said. "It is strictly money from criminals."

Bob Stearns of Austin, chairman of People Against Violent Crimes, said the compensation fund had paid \$8.9 million to crime victims the past year.

"It has helped a lot of victims through a lot of very, very tough times," Stearns said.

Travis County District Attorney Ronnie Earle told the approximately 50 representatives of crime victims groups that "it is our responsibility to change government and make it do its job."

"We are here to bring back the concept of shame to crime," Earle said. "Most of all, we want a society where we can go to the store late at night, where our wives and female relatives can walk the streets without the fear that now affects us."



Ferntastic

Photo by John Makely

Prospective plant owners look through the selection at a plant sale sponsored by the Floriculture Ornamental Horticulture Club Saturday. A time exposure was used to create the blurred effect.

A&M vocal group gives more than opportunity to sing

By Heidi Kemp
Reporter

Being a member of the Singing Cadets means more than the chance to sing; it means the opportunity to travel, meet new people and establish a fellowship with other members. Jeff Cox, the organization's president, says,

Kirk White, public relations officer for the Singing Cadets, says the male group, established in 1894

as the Glee Club, performs for A&M Mothers' clubs, private organizations and the Association of Former Singing Cadets.

White says the group performs locally in the fall and travels in the spring.

In addition to doing major tours and national telecasts, he says, the Singing Cadets also have recorded nine albums in the past 27 years.

In the last 20 years, the Singing

Cadets have been invited to the White House and performed on the Ed Sullivan and Mike Douglas television shows, he says.

Earlier this year the Singing Cadets performed in various Texas Sesquicentennial celebrations, Cox says.

The performances included a March 2 concert at Washington-on-the-Brazos and an April 21 production at the San Jacinto battleground.

Last year the group had 41 performances. Of these performances, 18 were local, 21 were throughout the state and two were in Louisiana, Cox says.

This fall the Singing Cadets will perform with the Symphonic Band and Miss Texas A&M in a special show, "Texas A&M Celebrates the Sesquicentennial," Cox says.

The Singing Cadets also will have a Christmas concert Dec. 7 with the

Women's Chorus, the Century Singers and the Reveliers.

This year the two-hour performance will be divided into two parts. The first will concentrate on upbeat religious songs and folk songs and the second will be a tribute to George and Ira Gershwin, Cox says.

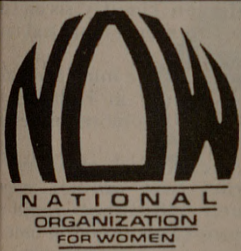
The Singing Cadets will begin the spring semester with a 10-day tour in West Texas with stops in Brown-

wood, Abilene, Midland and several other cities.

The director of the Singing Cadets, Robert L. Boone, says the group travels to a different area of Texas each year. Last year the group traveled to south-central Texas.

White says the group has only 35 members returning because most of last year's members graduated.

The group is recruiting 40 new members.



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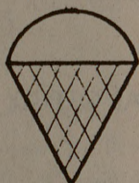
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